



Back to the Alley?

by Kelly Abeysinghe

The anti-choicers in Canada, south of the border and right here on campus better recognize that abortion will not go away. No amount of protest, moralization or propaganda will alter the fact that women, after considerable thought and for whatever personal reasons, may choose abortion in the event of an unintended pregnancy. It won't matter if abortion is illegal. It won't matter if a woman must travel to a different province, face humiliation and degradation, or be subjected to a dangerous procedure. History, and many injured and dead women have proven this fact. Fortunately, our society will never return to those desperate times when a woman had to choose between a compulsory pregnancy and a back alley abortion. If the anti-choicers are really intent on reducing the numbers of abortions performed, then a more constructive approach toward the issue must be taken.

There are ways, besides deny-

ing women the right to control their own bodies, to prevent abortion. We can make contraceptives more accessible. We can teach people of all ages about their sexuality, their reproductive capabilities, and the many methods of preventing pregnancy. This includes sexuality education programs for teenagers. Not discussing the issue will not make teen sexuality go away; we haven't been discussing it and teen pregnancy is more prevalent than ever. Teenagers have been left to rely heavily on misinformation from the media and their peers. Education and open discussion will encourage responsible decisions when they become sexually active.

Preventing unintended pregnancies also involves men taking responsibility for their half of the prevention. Using condoms may not be as pleasant as using nothing at all, but considering that the range of contraceptives available to women are either dangerous to their health or unreliable, it is incumbent upon men to get used to the idea.

We must push for research into safer, less damaging forms of birth control. It is an anomaly that the most "advanced" technological society in the world does not have the political will to develop a reliable, convenient contraceptive that won't leave women sterile.

In the final analysis, the issue here is not abortion. The issue is the unintended pregnancy and why it occurs. Rather than employing tactics that polarize and alienate, the anti-choicers should, as do pro-choicers, seek constructive answers. Rather than wasting money on sensationalist and violating propaganda, they should spend time and resources on lobbying governments to develop realistic preventative measures. Rather than viewing the pro-choice movement as a bunch of rabid feminists bent on getting pregnant for the pure joy of aborting their fetuses, they should realize that each woman who chooses to access abortion is simply a victim of a society that doesn't want to take the practical responsibility for its sexuality. *

Susan Cole On Pornography

by Catriona Johnson

Pornography and the Sex Crisis
by Susan G. Cole
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Published by Amanita Enterprises

Those women who attended the International Women's Day Potluck Dinner, have heard Susan Cole's powerful message on pornography, a hard-hitting and frightening message that questions today's sexual reality. Promoting her new book, *Pornography and the Sex Crisis*, Cole read passages to a silent audience who responded not only with applause, but by buying all of the books available at the dinner.

Cole, a radical feminist, and an award-winning journalist, spoke of the ten years of research which it took to write the book. And as one reads through its pages, one can only imagine the feeling of handing over years of personal thoughts and emotions on a subject which pervades our society, yet is to most ignored or unseen.

The book itself, is divided into three chapters, the first of which gives the reader a "theoretical framework of understanding" of pornography. Cole's framework expands on usual definitions of pornography in that it includes the experience of pornography, the sexual stereotyping which is promoted by pornography, and from this, the entrance of pornography into our society's cultural mainstream and eventually into "sexual norms." Two principles underlie Cole's analysis: that women matter, and that pornography is not just a picture but an action or practice in which "specific activities are performed by real people."

Cole uses the examples of films like *Snuff* and *Deep Throat* to describe the objectification of women through the use of violence and the acceptance of "just sex" portrayals. "The women in the

pictures are not considered human enough to worry about," states Cole who then cites as an example, Canada Customs' lacking response to the December 1984 edition of *Penthouse* which depicted women bound and hanging from trees and poles. Customs officers had difficulty seeing it as violence. Says Cole, "the myths of pornography have become more credible than the voice of real women."

According to Cole, many people do not wish to label publications such as *Penthouse* and *Playboy* as pornography, but because sexual subordination is portrayed in this "mainstream pornography" through the continued infantilization of women, the label fits. "The woman-child is fast becoming the sexual ideal. Youth not only conveys beauty, it conveys an absence of power." This absence of power is propelled by the portrayal of women as objects.

One of the many inspiring Emils . . .

by Mary E. Reay

The Persons Case

In 1916 Emily Murphy was appointed police magistrate for Edmonton. This was a significant event not only because Emily Murphy was the first woman judge in Canada, but in the British Empire as well. When she became a judge, the British North America Act specified what 'persons' were eligible to hold public office and the male pronouns were used in references. Almost daily during her first few months on the bench she had to cope with defense lawyers questioning the right of a 'non-person' to pass judgement.

It was because of this that Emily Murphy with the backing of such suffragettes as Nellie McClung, tackled the British North America Act's interpretation of persons being only male. This struggle took thirteen years in court and held within it the right of women to be able to be appointed to the Canadian Senate or not. The judgement would decide whether women were 'persons' within the context of the Constitution. The Supreme Court of Canada decided that women were not persons in 1928, so Emily Murphy took her case to the Privy Council of England. On October 18, 1929 the Privy Council of England overturned the Canadian Supreme Court's decision, thereby declaring women to be legally persons in Canada, enabling them to be eligible to be appointed to the Senate. This case was symbolically significant to the women's movement struggle.

Emily Murphy also was instrumental in the passing of Alberta's Dower Act of 1911 which assured married women legal inheritance rights which they did not possess before. *

Playboy crams photos of women between photos of good scotch and fine cars, making it appear as if the women are commodities and easily bought.

Cole's second chapter deals with the Canadian legal system and its current limitations with regards to pornography and censorship. However, unlike previous writers on the subject, she provides a feminist criteria for anti-pornography laws which, if implemented, would expand the current definitions of pornography and challenge those stereotypes which are considered norms. Her criteria include:

1) Considering pornography a practice, not merely pictures, words or ideas.

"A law that purports to deal with pornography must deal with all aspects of the pornographic process."

2) Targeting the harm women experience.

"As long as members of decency groups and even liberal commentators have been concerned about the damage pornography (or in its legal guise, obscenity) does to society, the laws have reflected those concerns. When the real experience of women is left out in the formulations of pornography laws, the laws tend to be ineffective."

3) Making the law women-centered and not gender-neutral.

"The law has to accept the fact that pornography is not gender-neutral and that women carry an unequal burden of the victimization that occurs in this practice."

4) Making the law women-initiated and women-driven.

"Such a law would give women the choice to take action if they had been victimized in pornography's production or consumption."

5) Compensating the victims of pornography.

"Only a law that provides compensation for a woman who is hurt can be truly empowering for that woman."

6) Advancing gender equality.

"As long as pornography flourishes it will actively perpetuate women's second class status and their vulnerability to sexual assault. A law that combats pornography must advance the sexual equality pornography denies."

7) Permitting artistic and educational dialogue on sexuality.

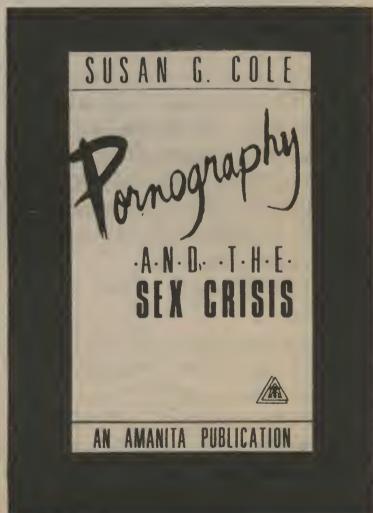
"Pornography laws must address the harm of pornography without jeopardizing the education and artistic projects that are committed to social/sexual change."

Cole herself says that when she first began speaking on the subject of pornography, she was accused of being "anti-sex". She states that at first she defended herself by saying that she was discussing pornography and not sex at all. Even after realizing that sexual subordination in pornography existed for sexual pleasure, she "still

would not accept the anti-sex label." But, she says, "I am against sexual pleasure as pornography and mass culture construct it". She states that "sexuality" and "diversity", when spoken together, are illusory.

Sex is political. This will astonish many people, who believe, as I did, that sexuality is the last bastion of individualism, the only remaining frontier on which people can indulge their personal tastes and desires . . . The idea of free choice in sexuality is a liberal fiction feminists have to expose then bury. If the forces of political dominance have been so rigorous and so careful to appropriate every other avenue of expression and social change, why and how can we imagine that they would have left sexuality out?

Cole's answer? She asks, "How would the world look, how would the world feel if as much time, money and creativity as are spent on eroticizing power, hierarchy, male dominance and female submission were spent on a truly transformative project like eroticizing equality?" *



New Women's Centre

by Katherine Anne Sudol

The new Women Helping Women Resource and Counselling Centre located at 2019 Oak Bay Avenue opened February 1st to provide a multifunctional facility which is designed to meet the special needs of women. Rhondda Cooke, the Centre's director, has an extensive background in counselling and in the facilitating of workshops; she is a certified counsellor with eight years of experience working with women.

Cooke says the idea for the privately funded Centre grew out of a long process of listening to many women's views on what programs and services are desired and presently lacking in availability. There is a huge demand for a non-governmental operation which is focused on meeting women's needs. The Centre has five specific functions: to provide quality counselling; action-oriented and facilitated support groups; information resources and an information exchange network; liaison with other women's organizations; and workshops and seminars.

The workshops are diverse in content, ranging from financial planning to body image and self esteem, to nutrition and lifestyle, to creative parenting strategies for single parents, to name but a few. An extensive agenda is already booked through to the end of May, including a Women and Co-Dependency workshop facilitated by Esther Muirhead (see article in this issue).



The Centre has had an overwhelmingly positive response and Cooke says, "As more women get out and do stuff, the more they will encourage other women to do the same. There has been a shift in consciousness; women have made up their minds to do what they want to do, and we intend to provide a meeting place so that this process may continue to develop."

Cooke has plans to open another Centre in the downtown area within the next year under the same banner, *Women Helping Women*, which will be slightly more clinical in that she intends it to be focused specifically on wo-

men's health on all levels. She would also like to open a Centre in the Western Communities at some point in the near future, since at present there is nothing in the way of a Centre for women to meet out there.

If you think all this is too good to be true, and will be unaffordable to students, such is not the case. Specific rates of payment are worked out with each individual, depending on the services required and the ability to pay for those services. So why not drop by and pick up a schedule of workshops, or call 370-1782 and see what the Centre has to offer you!

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Divine Rights

by Mary E. Reay

The role of women in our society has been viewed, and still is viewed, by many, as inferior to that of men. Where does this second class concept come from and why does it continue in an intellectually aware, technically advanced society? People usually say that's the way it is and it's hard to change tradition, but change will come if women only give it a chance.

Women have been fighting for over a century to obtain equality in education, politics, pay, etc. The list could go on and on. Why is this struggle taking so long? I feel that a major cause is organized religion and its traditional teachings. Over forty percent of the world's population is either Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Jewish, Islamic or of some Protestant faith.

The Bible, the Koran and the Torah clearly give women a second class status. Some examples are:

"Let the women learn in silence with all subjection, but I suffer not a woman to teach, nor usurp authority over man, but to be in silence." Timothy 1 (2)

Throughout the Bible, (which is advertised as the largest selling book in the world), there is laid out the role of a woman to a man. Man serves God and woman serves man. The Bible, as far as I know, has very few direct quotes of what God actually said. The rest was written by holymen, of what they interpreted the work of God or his teachings to be.

Morning Prayer of the Orthodox Jew:

Blessed art thou, Oh Lord our God, King of the Universe, that I was not born a gentile. Blessed are thou, Oh Lord our God, King of the Universe, that I was not born a slave. Blessed art thou, Oh Lord our God, King of the Universe, that I was not born a woman.

And from the Koran:

"Men are superior to women on account of the qualities which God has given them pre-eminence."

So it seems our rich heritage of ideology about women has been contributed to greatly by Christian, Jewish and Islamic religions. People argue that the ideologies expressed by the above quote are relics, a thing of the past. Not so. The ideology has only become unconscious and continues to permeate our society. One possible reason as to why this non-conscious ideology remains is because

The Bible, as far as I know, has very few direct quotes of what God actually said.

alternative beliefs and attitudes about women go unimagined.

Men have the power and control over most religions. They interpret the holy scriptures as they understand them, and change them when they feel a need. Women have no involvement in this level of religion. The class division is obvious.

Women have only begun to scratch the surface of some religious power hierarchies. Women are allowed to become ministers in the United Church, as well as in several other protestant religions. The Catholic Church now allows women to be lay speakers, but only on a part-time basis.

The Anglican Church allows women to become ministers, but only if the Archbishop of the Diocese allows it. A woman has been trying for many years to become a minister in Victoria, B.C., but to no avail, as the Archbishop in her area does not feel that women should be ministers.

The Mormon Church in the last few years, has allowed black men

to become ministers, but not a woman. In fact, there were several women excommunicated in the last few years for publicly supporting the Equal Rights Amendment. As Richard Robertson, the Canadian director of public communication for the Mormon Church said:

"The very foundation of our society is couched in a mother's arms, ERA disrupts that fundamental institution. The traditional family is sacrosanct, an institution that must be protected at all cost. We are bound by the Scripture in which roles were divinely established with Adam and Eve." (McLeans, 01/21/80). "For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, for as much as he is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." (Corinthians II (7-8-9).

A woman's role cannot be one of servant to man, but over and over again the public is told it is. With preachings like the ones above, how can equality be obtained? How can you argue against a doctrine that is written, interpreted, and controlled by men? Religion has been used, and is used, as another tool to suppress women and keep them in their place, helpless without power.

The ideas of the inferior status of women is deeply rooted in our society and will take a great deal of effort to eradicate. The indoctrination into traditional religious beliefs must stop; it just validates male supremacy over the female.

Once the structures which produce and support that ideology are changed, and only then, can the equality of the sexes be realized. Myself, I'm fairly pessimistic about either the willingness, or the ability, of traditional religious teachings to change. *

Editorial

"I can think, I can wait and I can fast." Words to live by. The way I meet each of these three elements is an easy way for me to know myself. I think almost non-stop, my struggle being in how to quiet my mind, how to not-think for a time, to cleanse, release. Waiting for me is the most difficult of the three, patience is the prayer. Tolerance too, these two ways of being, close sisters, patience and tolerance, kindly entities. And huge challenges is this scratch-n-win society.

Fasting is the easiest for me. A small weekly gesture for the hungry of the world. Here, I can drink the water and not get sick from it — at least most of my life up to now I've been able to. I love water very much. After all, water is seventy percent of what I am, and I love myself. When I do break my fast, I try to be careful about what food it is that I eat as well as how I prepare it and how I eat it. Remember that adage "it's not just what you say, it's how you say it"? I think the same is true of food; you are what you eat, and how you eat.

Eating from low on the food chain is the easiest way to live softer, especially when combined with the growing of one's own food, even if it's only a little bit, even if it's only sprouts in a jar. I have chosen to be a vegetarian, and contrary to popular belief, it is not difficult to get all the nutrients necessary for a healthy body from a vegan diet. In fact, it has been shown that meat is very difficult for the human body to digest. "We lack the canine teeth which carnivorous animals have, and we don't have the acid saliva or the powerful digestive juices to break down the flesh. We have a long intestine which is associated with an herbivorous diet", says Carol Adams in her article *The Oedipal Complex: Vegetarianism and Feminism*. Combine meat with refined flour products, and what do you get? A constipated and unhappy culture.

It has been shown that commercially available meat usually contains synthetic hormones and/or synthetic dyes, which are undigestible. Adams continues, "Researching what produced cancer I discovered that DES, used to fatten beef, was the cause of uterine cancer in pubescent girls whose mothers had taken it. The hormones, present in the meat we eat, is especially harmful to women for it unbalances our hormonal state . . . (and) preservatives in meat can deform the fetus of a pregnant woman."

It is also well known that many of these "commercial" animals have been biogenetically altered, and we do not yet know what the long-term effects of this type of technological practice may be. These animals often live in crowded unsanitary conditions, and die in a heightened state of fear, adrenalin rushing through their tissue. What happens when one eats that fear-induced adrenalin-filled meat?

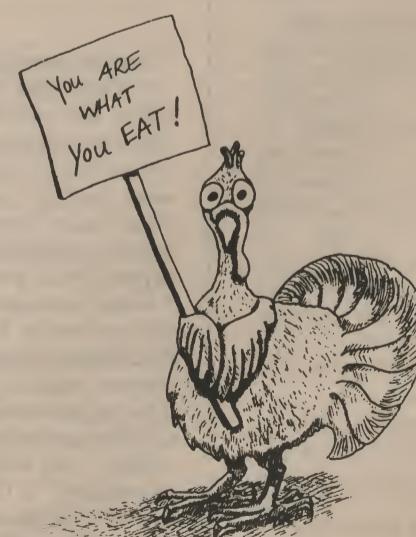
"There are many connections between a carnivorous race and a sexist society. The rape of the land by meat-eaters (it requires six to ten times as much land to feed meat-eaters) is taken for granted just as the rape of women is condoned." Adams concludes: "Vegetarianism is one way of putting feminism into action."

So if you don't eat meat, what do you eat? It is a common question, and reasonable enough. There is, of course, a multitude of possible answers, and I think the best short answer is to suggest that the questioner get their hands on a few good books. Some personal favourites are the classic *Laurel's Kitchen*, *The Moosewood Cookbook*, and *Not Just a Load of Old Lentils*. The most important thing to remember is to carefully choose foods that combine well. The simpler the better is a good rule of thumb.

More important to me than what I eat is how I eat, and how I prepare my meals. First, I thank whatever vegetable or grain, fruit or nut that so generously gave of their life that I may continue mine, and I ask within to be worthy of their gift. I run through all the hands that have helped this 'food' to reach me until I look down at my own hands. The preparation of food is an integral part of the dance of life, a meditation on nourishment. If I ask for love to flow from my heart-mind out my hands and into the food I touch in preparation for a meal, then I can imagine that that love flows into the food and becomes part of what will be ingested. The same works with any other type of energy flow, and I believe that food prepared when feeling hostile or resentful makes the person who eats it ill.

Dishes are important too. I eat most of my meals out of a hand-made greenglazed bowl with wooden chopsticks. I know the bowl was made with a strong prayer for the love that heals, and the use of chopsticks is dual purpose: I am allergic to metal and thus don't like to come in contact with it, and using chopsticks makes me eat slower. Eating slower is not only easier on the digestive system, it also leaves me feeling satisfied after eating seemingly very little, thus conserving in a small way.

I think that the beauty in my favourite bowl nourishes me in other parts of myself. When I am nourished more there, in the parts of me that beauty touches, I find I need less nourishment in 'food value', again conserving in a small way. Like pennies. I respect and appreciate what is available to me now more than ever before. Thank you, dear mother of us all, for this life, these hands, this green bowl. *



Opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily in accordance with those of the Women's Studies Department. We will print no racist, sexist or homophobic material.

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We asked the students of the present 2nd, 3rd and 4th year classes in Women's Studies what they think Women's Studies means for them. This is an experiment in collective writing, and many voices are woven together to make this portrait. Enjoy.

Women's Studies is learning to look at the world through Feminist-coloured glasses. *

For me WS has become an invaluable tool with which I am able to work my way through my days with a sense of connectedness and critical analysis. As much as I have learned a wealth of self-knowledge, I have also gained a greater understanding and appreciation for all women. My mother and grandmother have become objects of my admiration rather than my sympathy. I have come not only to accept my womaness but to cherish it. In doing so, I believe that I've become a more loving and giving human being. I believe that unfocused anger (experimental psychologists call it "shame rage") is born out of frustrated ignorance, and the more one learns about female/male relations, the less "raving" they become . . . contrary to popular belief! *

I —
in my living room:
middle-class
white
student,
possessor of
bourgeois leisure.

I place a vase
of fresh-bought flowers,
settle down
to work.

You —
woman in my textbook:
poor
black
pregnant,
citizen of
"developing nations"
You sift through slag-heaps
of industrial waste
for tid-bits
to feed your child.

My enemies:
The White Christian Capitalist Patriarchy
(but aren't the roses lovely
in mother's cut-glass vase?)

Your enemies:
The men who forced you from your land
The boss who pays you not enough
The man who beats you hard at night.

I: educated to see your pain
You: labouring to support my class.

How can we share our rage? *

WS is a faculty of learning that teaches one to consider and question issues that concern women. In doing this it provides students with the power to transcend beyond the tenets of academic learning into the realm of thinking that is alive with holistic understanding of themselves, and with the world in which they live. In WS I did not learn the academic rules for asking a question, but how to ask my own question in my own way and, that my own method of asking was indeed valid. WS is a validation of women's intellectual capabilities and women's knowledge. *

Women's Studies 200B is the most exciting class that I have ever taken. I strongly suggest this course for anyone who is interested in trying to untangle some of the weird traditions of our society. The atmosphere in my class is very comfortable and discussion comes easily. Each class presents a new added dimension and leaves me feeling full of new ideas to contemplate. It is a challenging academic course full of very dynamic people. *

Women's Studies 200B is definitely one of the best courses I've taken in my four years at UVic. WS is provocative, enlightening, and very stimulating, both emotionally and intellectually. Unlike many courses I've taken, in which I've struggled to stay alert or even awake, WS always seems to end too soon. It's sad that so many students are scared of WS, and feminism in general, because they are missing some of the best courses offered on campus. *

Women's Studies has been a place for me to learn about women's history, women's potential, women's feelings, women's thoughts and women's accomplishments. I have learned how the world has been, how it is now, and how it could be for women. I have learned, through this knowledge (sociological, psychological, biological, historical, literary), to develop my own philosophy of what it means to me to be female and how I personally want to live in this world as a woman in my work, my home, my relationships and my spirituality. I have also learned to clarify my own attitudes and values about women and men and their interactions and what I expect, need and want from such interactions. *

A chance to look at the world and myself from a different perspective, to challenge the accepted (and my own) way of thinking about women and myself, and to develop a sense of history and belonging. *

Women and Co-Dependence

by Esther Muirhead

Co-dependence? Oh no, not another psycho-babble label some academic has invented to make money off the ignorant masses of walking wounded. Actually, the concept rose out of the grass-roots self-help movement of AA and Al-Anon.

I've been struggling for many years to heal myself of vague and sometimes violent symptoms of childhood emotional and sexual abuse. After I quit drinking, doing dope, trying to save my family and the massacre of peasants in Central America, I still felt exhausted, useless, ripped-off and lonely.

After I had two beautiful daughters, a fairly stable marriage, a degree and a bunch of friends, why do I still battle the inner voices of criticism, shame, guilt, and self-hatred? Why do I turn my rage on the adorable daughter I love so much? Why do I lie when I could just as easily tell the truth? Why do I try to be nicer, kinder and more loving to people who walked all over me? How could I stuff down three helpings of beans and rice when I'm not even hungry? How could every thing, person, situation, behaviour and thought be so poisoned with my need to control and manage myself?

As I began to allow the definition of co-dependence into my consciousness, my secrets, defenses and fears became more acceptable and understandable. Hey — I'm not crazy after all. Since then, the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel has remained in sight, and I'm not sabotaging and hurting myself half as much as in the past. The following is some of what I learned about co-dependence.

Co-dependence is a term which was initially used to describe the coping strategies developed by members of alcoholic families. The term now describes any maladaptive behaviours used to survive in a dysfunctional family of any kind. A dysfunctional family is often dominated by one person's unpredictable moods and irrational behaviours. The most demanding family members controls and wields power over the lives of the other family members. The rest of them adjust, adapt, and stay on guard to avoid upsetting or displeasing the neediest person.

As a result of living in this kind of environment, there are a number of effects that impose themselves upon the family and its members. The open expression of feelings as well as the direct discussion of

personal or interpersonal conflict is not allowed. The need to deny the presence of any problems and the need to protect the family system's fragile equilibrium takes precedence over the needs of individual family members.

Some elements present in a dysfunctional family might include chronic mental or physical illness or a compulsive tendency toward perfectionism, overwork or intellectualizing. There might be the pressure of a secret scandal, perhaps one that has been casting a shadow on the family for several generations — alcoholism, physical abuse, sexual abuse, incest, a hereditary disease, suicide, or "illegitimate birth."

It is a common occurrence in a crisis-oriented family for each of the members to assume a role designed to either compensate for or cover up the effects of the damage created by the perpetrator. One person becomes a hero or over-achiever whose job is to maintain a good public image for the family. One child becomes a caretaker who is responsible for rescuing parents and siblings in crisis situations. Another takes on the scapegoat role so that others can use her or him to project negativity onto, and often develops into a rebellious adolescent. Frequently one child becomes the quiet, withdrawn "lost child". Another necessary role in the dysfunctional family is the clown or entertainer who helps to relieve built-up tensions within the system. In adult life, co-dependents continue to wear these masks, or a variety of other rigid roles they saw enacted in the family.

Compulsive behaviours and thought-patterns that arise from one's family are reinforced in the institutions and the society in which we live. Chronic avoidance of the unconscious or the inner child is passed on from one generation to the next and becomes regarded in social norms. The entertainment business, the military, the political system, the economic structure of society, our religions, hospitals, and schools all tend to reinforce feelings of powerlessness, isolation and alienation. It seems as though they are intent on keeping us too busy to notice our addictions. Our society appears to encourage addictive life-styles so that, focused on pleasure and indulgence, we don't seriously challenge the system.

Co-dependence is an especially important issue for women. The characteristics and behaviours of

co-dependency are often considered more acceptable or "normal" when displayed by women, and are similar to how the oppression of sexism surfaces in "non-liberated" women. The patriarchy is the addictive process institutionalized and has been called the Addictive System by Anne Wilson Schaeff, a leading psychotherapist and author on the subject.

As soon as women refuse to operate out of their internalized oppression, the Addictive System

will not get the support it needs to continue. Stepping out of the insidious and subtle effects of living is an on-going process; yet most of us have been encouraged to avoid pain. Paradoxically, this avoidance of legitimate pain and emotional suffering is the primary basis for the Addictive System. As Bruce Cockburn has declared, "the trouble with normal is it always gets worse," hence the breakdown of personal and political integrity within individuals and larger sys-

tems.

Being nice, selfless, manipulative and inclined toward living a victim lifestyle are characteristics often viewed as traditional female qualities. If a woman seeks any of the mainstream kinds of help to recover from co-dependence, she risks being labelled "neurotic". If a woman cannot pay for specialized treatment, she is forced to enter a male-dominated mental health system. Women in this sys-

Co-Dependence — page 4

Basic Human Right

by Cathy Richardson

As equality of the sexes is one of the main elements of the Swedish social-democratic ideology, childcare plays a crucial role in providing maximum opportunities for women, children and men. Sweden has the most extensive and well-coordinated childcare system in the western world. Although most childcare centres take the form of the standard model there are also centres which offer instruction according to specific philosophical, religious or pedagogical points of view.

Each family pays a sum of approximately \$140 per month for a child to attend childcare but the cost is lowered proportionately for each additional child in attendance. Working for eight months in a childcare centre in a suburb of Stockholm has convinced me that childcare can be a very positive experience for children (when it is based on a pedagogical philosophy which takes into account the psychological, social and emotional developmental needs). Its positive effect is reinforced when the philosophy of childcare is supported by society and guilt is not placed on parents who use the childcare system. In Sweden, the critics of childcare have the resources to stay at home with their children or to hire foreign au pairs. There is also a community program which provides childcare in the home when there is a group of five children who partake.

Children often arrive at the childcare "cottage" at 8 a.m. where they have breakfast together with staff members. The centres usually have two or three large sections of about thirteen children in each. There is a preschool teacher employed in each section along with three or four as-

sistants, depending on the number of infants. Siblings are often placed together in the same group. During the day, children are often divided up into groups, sometimes according to age and sometimes depending on the activities. Much free choice is left to each child to decide how they want to spend their day. Non-Swedish children are provided instruction in their mother tongue if they form a significant number (four or five per centre). The major languages offered in second language instruction are Finnish, Farsi (Persian), Turkish and Spanish. Many children are bi or trilingual by the time they reach the age of six. The age of children in childcare commonly ranges from two to six years. Children begin elementary school at the age of seven years.

The day is balanced with special activities and time for outdoor play. Swedes are not afraid of the weather — dressing appropriately for it that is. The children enjoy being outdoors even in temperatures of minus ten degrees Celsius. Most childcare centres have a kitchen person to prepare the lunch (a warm meal often equivalent to a Canadian dinner). Children in the childcare often participate in meal preparation and baking. In fact, they are included in most activities, from taking turns setting the table to helping with the grocery shopping and the selection of library books. Swedish children's books are most interesting as they provide heroes and role models for both sexes, reflect current societal situations which they can relate to, and do not use language which is gender discriminatory.

The state provides the funding for the supplies needed for the childcare centres (everything from diapers and diaper rash creams to

art supplies and food). Each childcare is allotted a budget and there is room for decision making on behalf of the individual centres as to how they will spend their money.

The staff contribute much of their evening time to meetings, planning future activities as well as meeting with parents and discussing the needs of individual children. There is much emphasis placed on good working relations between staff members to create a harmonious atmosphere for the children. Parents are encouraged to spend time at the centre and often stay for about half an hour before going home with their child. Although children are mostly always overjoyed to see their parents, they seldom want to go home. Generally, both the child's mother and father are equally visible and play an equally large role in interacting with the children, the childcare staff, and creating a sense of community.

The days in which children feel a special need to stay home with a parent are accounted for. Parents are allotted a certain number of days in which they can be home from work with their child and receive 80 percent of their salary. Staying home for "reasons of health" incorporates both physical and emotional health.

It is a common belief in Sweden that childcare is important and a basic human right. The general feeling is that responsibility for a child's development should not be left solely up to childcare workers. It is the balance of quality time spent in childcare combined with quality time spent at home which is the formula for success. In addition, the Swedish government legislation to protect the rights and well-being of children is unequalled by any other country.

November 20, 1987
I am a grandmother.
My daughter-in-law
has birthed
a tiny woman child,
four pounds
eleven ounces.

This tiny woman child
struggled into the world
Feet and bum first.

The first part
of her journey
is being lived
in an incubator
where she learns
to breathe on her own.

Her father, in awe,
in tears, and in love,
watched this woman child

make her self known.
She was wet and sticky
and reluctant to cry,
and, finally
when she did make a sound,
it was her father
who cried.

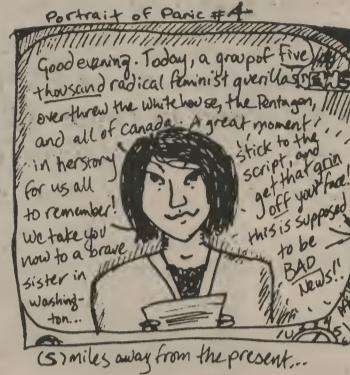
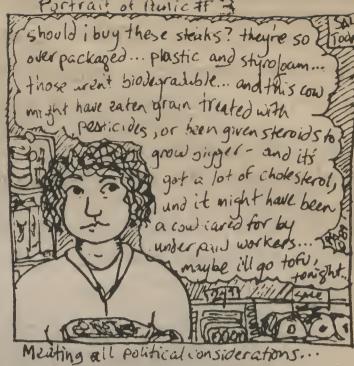
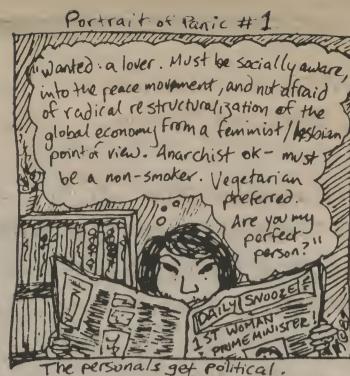
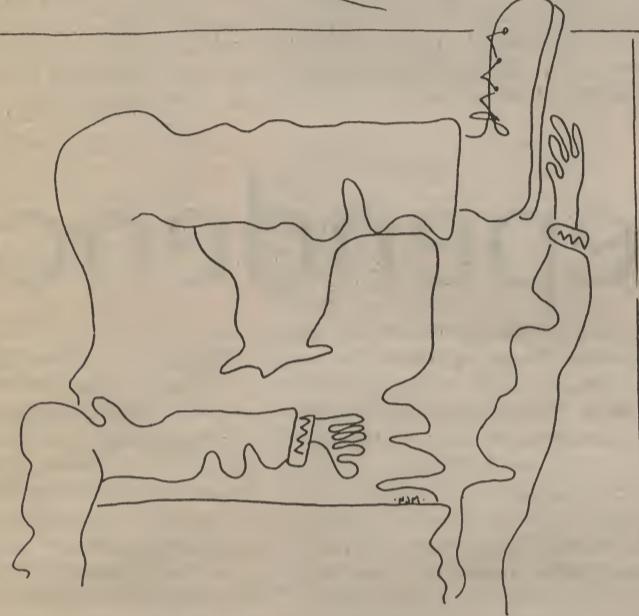
Her mother recovers
with forty-seven stitches.
'Forty-seven' bangs
around inside my head,
kick starts my heart,
screams past my throat;

Is it possible
that this moment in time
could be the seed
that will grow
for all of humankind?
Welcome to our world
tiny woman grandchild.
Welcome to your world,
its beginning full of adversity . . .

Lying on the summer grass, two girls were thinking out loud to each other. The one girl looked thoughtfully down at the sole of her shoe.

"I've always wondered," she said suddenly as she fingered the rough edge of her heel, "I know soles wear down . . . but where do you suppose they go . . . ?"

NJ Morris



Column on Karma

by Camelia Tristes

We walk along in the autumn damp, leaves piled high near the side of the road. I momentarily consider running through them, kicking them into the air with broad sweeps of my feet. I look at her as I suddenly stop. "What?" she says. "Can you hold this for a sec?" I say, passing her my backpack. I walk to the edge of a three foot high, six foot wide trough of brown leaves, glistening eerily under the street lights, turn around and, body straight, let myself fall backward onto the mother's cushion. It reminds me of trust games I learned in theatre classes so long ago. Stand at the edge of the stage and fall off backward and let the classmates catch you. The glow inside starts again. "Wanna try it?" I say standing up and feeling the warmth spread out toward her from within my breast. "I dunno" she says looking at the sidewalk. "Oh, c'mon" I say in that sisterly-motherly voice, "it feels really good . . . " "Okay" she says in the tone that knows I'm not going to let up. She passes me her pack as well as my own, then gets me to hold her bike. "Pick a new fluffier spot" I suggest. She does. I watch her fall. She doesn't bend, she lets the full sensation happen. I watch her face and I see the rush of joy washing over it. I love her for it.

We walk on the quiet road, early spring, mid-afternoon. We

see a for sale sign on the fence, and decide that this might be the place. We look. No buildings visible, slight curve of the earth rolling down to the sea. "Wanna take a closer look?" I say, glints of daring flashing from my eye to hers. "Well . . . uh . . . ya, sure, why not? If it's nice maybe we can have the picnic here instead." "Exactly. C'mon." We manage to get the old gate open wide enough to let us through, and carefully close it behind us. The ground is springy beneath our feet, the grass already long in some places. We discover a multitude of gnarly old oak trees, twisted by time and the coastal winds. The grass beneath them is very long, deep green lush. She stops. Breathes full into her belly, slow. "Here." She pauses. "Let's stay here." I pull the blanket from the pack and flick my arms to make it fly softly down, flat out. She sits and takes off her shoes, wiggling the little toes. We begin the ceremony of nourishment, eating. Now knowing one another well enough to enjoy other contact, we do not speak. Birds. Tree-talk breezes. I lie back, closing my eyes. When I open them, all I can see is the rich spinach-coloured blades reaching out for the brilliant blue of the sky. I can smell her this near, this still. And I love her for it.

* * * * *

Co-Dependence — from page 3
tem will receive shock treatment twice as often as men and will receive 72% of the mood-altering drugs that are prescribed. Women attempt suicide twice as often as men, and only 17% of Canadian psychiatrists and 33% of Canadian psychologists are women. The medical system, as it is currently structured, is clearly not a resource for women wanting to recover from their co-dependence. Fortunately, the problems of co-dependency are now becoming better understood and more uni-

versally recognized throughout our society. The popular "Anonymous" programs (Alcoholics, Overeaters, Narcotics, etc.), are extremely effective in helping people deal with themselves and their recovery. There are also a number of excellent publications which deal with the various issues around co-dependency. Addiction and co-dependency, however, are difficult and complex problems which are definitely not easy to deal with alone. If you feel that they are having an effect on your life, then it is advisable to

look to the various groups that are readily available to you.

Esther Muirhead is a 35 year old recovering co-dependent. She is a parent of two children, and has a degree in Social Work. She leads an addiction and co-dependence support group called Women and Co-dependence, which is offered through the Women Helping Women Resource Centre. The support groups she leads use the theory and practice of feminist peer counselling to focus on freeing the body's natural healing processes. *

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